

## PROGRAMME OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE INTERNATIONAL UNION AGAINST THE VENEREAL DISEASES AND THE TREPONEMATOSES\*

BY

NORMAN ACTON†

*World Veterans Federation, Paris*

The following recommendations are based on the combined experience of the Regional Office for the Americas and the Union's representation at United Nations headquarters. Liaison with member organizations and other interested groups and individuals has identified certain specific needs in the Americas which it is believed may also exist in other parts of the world. Interpretation of the Union in U.N. circles will benefit from a statement of areas of interest and an indication of priorities. The following subject headings are employed, therefore, not to suggest any major re-orientation of Union programme, but to facilitate analysis of the types of activity to be considered.

### ORGANIZATION

The current situation in many countries does not provide fertile ground for the expansion of existing voluntary organizations devoted to venereal disease control and related activity, or for the development of new voluntary organizations in this field. While the Union should certainly continue to encourage and assist any efforts to expand voluntary organization, it is not possible to justify the expenditure of significant staff or other resources on purely organizational activity at this time. Priorities in the area of organization are:

(1) Strengthening communications and relationships between the Union, its regional offices, and the member organizations.

(2) Further development and implementation of the Union's unique role as a non-governmental, informal link among all individuals and organizations,

be they governmental or private, interested in the objectives of the Union. The development of public health facilities in more and more countries, coupled with the improved status of international governmental institutions, gives this function of the Union ever-increasing importance.

### INFORMATION

The Union has a primary responsibility to insure the international distribution of information concerning developments in its field of interest. This responsibility should be understood to encompass both technical information and material useful in connexion with the organization of effort in the various countries. Among the means available are:

(1) *Publications.*—There is evidence that most senior personnel in ministries of health, major voluntary organizations, etc., receive a reasonably adequate flow of information through professional journals and other media. The more serious need is for carefully selected information which will be useful to the "second level" of personnel who are doing the field work. These persons frequently have more limited access to published material. It is believed, therefore, that the Union might usefully consider establishing a service to perform the following:

(a) Through a panel of consultants, who are regularly aware of the current literature in their area, to screen such literature to select items which present new information or are otherwise of special significance to workers in the V.D. control field.

(b) To distribute such selected items either by translating specific publications into one of the established working languages or by collecting and summarizing and also translating items from current literature and publishing it periodically.

\*Read at the General Assembly of the I.U.V.D.T., London England, October 13, 1959.

† Former Executive Director, U.S. Committee for U.N.I.C.E.F.; Deputy Secretary-General, World Veterans Federation; Member, International Advisory Committee of the American Social Hygiene Association.

(c) If the finances are available, to gather some of the "classics" in the field and arrange for their translation and distribution to the "second level" worker.

(2) *Films*.—The distribution of existing films is, of course, most worthwhile. The need for new and more imaginative films is great and there is a growing need for films aimed at the general public produced in a manner to be meaningful to those individuals who are most affected by V.D. problems.

#### EXCHANGE OF PERSONS

(1) *Experts*.—The international exchange of experts should continue to be an activity in which the Union co-operates closely. Furthermore, in its relationships with U.N. bodies and others, the Union should continue to urge the importance of financial support for this purpose.

(2) *Training*.—Referring again to the "second level" workers and also to students, the Union can do much to increase international opportunity for training. It is suggested that the Union might compile information concerning all existing funds to aid international training (*i.e.* U.N. fellowships, university fellowships and scholarships, governmental programmes, foundations, corporations — much of which is already accumulated and needs only to be analysed in terms of our speciality). Member organizations and others should then be informed of existing opportunities and acquainted with the fact that the Union will assist in the placement of likely candidates. There may be gaps which the Union might be able to fill by approaching potential sponsor institutions.

#### CONFERENCES

The Union's current activity in this area includes its own General Assembly and internal organ meetings, and its co-operation in meetings held by the World Health Organization and other organizations. All such activity is important but it should be recognized this does not reach the widest possible audience. A series of regional conferences would be valuable if funds for them were available:

- (1) They bring together those faced with similar problems.
- (2) They give more people and "second level" workers from each country a chance to participate and to learn.
- (3) They focus attention on the VD control problem in all participating countries.
- (4) They interpret the IUVDT and its regional offices to a wider audience.
- (5) They define more specific programme needs by bringing together responsible persons sharing similar problems.

#### CONSULTATION AND REPRESENTATION

In connexion with the above suggestions, there is a constant need to maintain a close relationship with the United Nations. We have established formal relationships with the appropriate agencies and should of course continue to co-operate closely. In the same way, liaison with other non-governmental organizations should be maintained.

#### SUMMARY

The above recommendations are based on several premises which it may be well to re-state.

(1) The small group of primary experts in our field have established means of communication through the Union and other channels. We desire their participation and we desire to offer service to them in the accomplishment of their work; but providing a channel of communication and a meeting ground does not constitute a programme which fulfills our stated responsibilities.

(2) We must give increased attention to the "second level" worker in our field. These are not only the leaders of the future but also to-day's points of contact with people at large. Their competence, technical and social, can do much to shape the success of our efforts. And yet resources to inform them, to raise their status, and otherwise prepare them for their important task are limited. In this the Union can help.

(3) All forms of non-governmental associations give the opportunity for people to come together freely to advance their own particular interests as their skill, imagination, and devotion makes this possible. This is the constant counterbalance against the erosion of individual freedom and responsibility; it provides the climate for experimentation and improvement. And it is especially important in a field where government has assumed so much responsibility—important, as was said above, not only for voluntary interests, but also for governmental institutions, who can make good and wise use of informal channels of communication and action such as those provided by responsible voluntary organizations.

#### Notions de programme pour l'Union Internationale contre les Maladies Vénériennes et les Tréponématoses.

##### Résumé

Les recommandations ci-dessus se basent sur plusieurs prémisses qui méritent d'être répétées.

(1) Le petit groupe de premiers experts dans notre domaine a établi des moyens de communication par l'Union et par d'autres voies. Nous souhaitons leur

participation et nous voulons leur offrir nos services dans la réalisation de leur travail; toutefois, la création des voies de communication et d'un lieu de réunion ne constitue pas un programme permettant de nous acquitter de nos responsabilités déclarées.

(2) Nous devons attacher plus d'attention aux travailleurs "du deuxième niveau" dans notre domaine. Ils sont non seulement les chefs de demain, mais aussi les points de contact avec le peuple d'aujourd'hui. Leur compétence, technique et sociale, peut aider beaucoup à couronner nos efforts de succès. Cependant, les ressources pour les informer, pour élever leur rang et pour les préparer de toute autre manière à accomplir leur tâche importante, sont limitées. C'est là que l'Union peut aider.

(3) Toutes les formes d'association non-gouvernementale permettent la réunion libre des gens pour avancer leur intérêts particuliers dans la mesure de leur talent, imagination et dévouement. C'est un contre-poids toujours présent devant l'érosion de la liberté et responsabilité individuelles; elle crée le climat pour l'expérimentation et l'amélioration. Cela est particulièrement important dans un domaine où le gouvernement a assumé tant de responsabilité—important, nous avons dit, non seulement pour des intérêts indépendants, mais aussi pour des institutions gouvernementales, qui peuvent faire bon et prudent usage de voies officielles de communication et d'action, créées par des organisations indépendantes compétentes.